

THE HANDY-MAN

AND OTHER
VERSES

BY
HAROLD
BEGBIE.



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To

Mr. Needham

With kindest regards from

The Author

2nd June 1902

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THE HANDY MAN

TWO BOOKS OF THE SEA.

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Sea Stories.

BY

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THE HANDY MAN

And Other Verses

By HAROLD BEGBIE

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TOUCHSTONE. *Come, sit, sit, and a song.*

FIRST PAGE. *Shall we clap into 't roundly, without haroking or spitting or saying we are hoarse, which are the only prologues to a bad voice?*

SECOND PAGE. *I' faith, i' faith; and both in a tune, like two gipsies on a horse.*

ERRATUM.

Page 81, line 4, for "There" read "These"

NOTE

THE majority of these verses appeared in the Morning Post ; others in the Globe, Literature, and To-Day, through the courtesy of whose editors I am permitted to publish them in their present form. The lines "Knight o' the Sea" were written for the Souvenir of the Royal Naval and Military Bazaar.

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THE HANDY MAN

(LADYSMITH, OCTOBER 30, 1899)

WE'VE seen him dragging his guns along in the
Agricultural Hall,
Trotting about in the soundless tan as if he were
playing at ball,
But none of us saw him in far Natal, tugging away
at his load
Through the ruts in the road which the rain had
cut, and where there was never a road ;

Nobody heard it or saw it, and there wasn't a band
to play,
But he landed 'em up at 'Ladysmith from the
cruiser down in the bay ;
And just when the guns were needed, and looking
quite spick and span,
With a nod to the gent of the Absent Mind, up
doubles the Handy Man.

Handy afloat, handy ashore, handier still in
a hole,
Ready to swarm up a mountain-side, or walk
on a greasy pole ;
Lugging a gun through a desert, scrubbing a
deck milk-white,
Jack is the man for a children's romp and the
awkward hour of a fight.

He finds the range in the time it takes to cock his
eye on the foe,

He stands as stiff as a Noah's Ark till his officer
says "Let go!"

And as soon as he's hit where he's told to hit, and
somebody's said "Well done,"

He turns with a click to the right-about, and
trundles away with his gun.

His eye is the eye of the eagle that sees and knows
from afar,

His hand is as swift as the hand that smote the
triumph of Trafalgar,

And the heart is the heart of a lion that hides in
the glorious dress

Where the only gold is the name he loves with its
pennon of H.M.S.

Handy afloat, handy ashore, sleeps like a babe
in his bunk,
Ready to dance, and ready to fight, and never
been known to funk ;
'Tugging his gun behind him, he's fighting his
way to Heav'n—
Doing the thing he is told to do, to the tune
of the Four-point-Sev'n.

He keeps his cap for his own hard head when
whispers of friendship fly,
It isn't the thing for a Handy Man to swop with
a fond ally ;
And it isn't the wish of the Handy Man that a
furriner's arm should pull
A single oar in the trim tough boat, whose skipper
is old John Bull.

He keeps to himself does the Handy Man, when
the clouds are pack'd for a squall,
But he comes with his gun from the ends of the
earth when the bugle gives him a call ;
And the babe sleeps sound in her cot o' nights, and
the trader may plot and plan,
For under the stars on the rolling deep stands the
vigilant Handy Man.

Handy afloat, handy ashore, easiest soul to
please,
Ready to straddle a merry-go-round or ride
on the plunging seas ;
Son of this sea-girt England, ward of the
world-wide breed,
Jack is the man for the midnight watch or
the hour of the Empire's need.

BOTH ARMS

A SAILOR'S MARCHING SONG

TRAMP! tramp! this is my song,
Soldier and sailor marching along,
One from the barrack and one from the ship,
Marching along with a swing from his hip;
Over the mountains and on thro' the plains;
Hark to the jingle of weapons and chains;
Storming the trenches and breaking the
square,
Both arms together—a thundering pair!

O the left you hold for hitting, and the right you
keep for guard,

And the left can leap out lusty and can slog
almighty hard!

But there comes a time, my hearties, and the
sailor isn't loth,

When you've got to sling two fists in, when you've
got to slam with both.

Tramp! tramp! here's a good song,
Soldier and sailor marching along,
Shoulder to shoulder, eyes straight ahead,
Swinging their arms to the tune of the
tread.

Tramp! tramp! hark to the sound!
Thunder of marching that rolls from the
ground.

Danger to England? On to the foe!

Both arms together, and swift be the blow!

O the left you hold for hitting, and the right you
keep for guard,

And the left can leap out lusty and can slog
almighty hard!

But there comes a time, my hearties, and the
sailor isn't loth,

When you up and sling two fists in, when you
slam away with both.

'Tramp! tramp! Look in their eyes—

Shoulder to shoulder—England's allies:

Never they tremble, never despair,

Marching to Death with their heads in the
air!

Guarding our island, guarding our realm,
True to the word of the man at the helm,
True to our honour, valiant and strong,
Both arms together, swinging along !

O the left you hold for hitting, and the right you
keep for guard,
And the left can leap out lusty and can slog
almighty hard !
But there comes a time, my hearties, and the
sailor isn't loth,
When you sling two iron fists in, when you slog
and slam with both.

THE SONG OF FIGHTING JACK

THE cruiser's lying idle in the bay

With the water washing softly off her side,
And the wind that hits her rigging smells of
spray,

Smells of biting salt it's whistled from the
tide ;

I can hear the ocean calling in my sleep,

I can hear her whisper womanly, and croon,

I can see the laughing glitter on the deep

From the man what grins so pleasant in the
moon.

THE SONG OF FIGHTING JACK 11

But I hear as well as the grinding swell
The roar of the gun and the shriek of the
shell ;

I see the track where the horsemen hack,
And I wake to know I am fighting Jack,
Wake to know I am striking a blow
With my old sea gun at an old land foe.

The gun I've fired across the water's glint
Rips the rocks where they are hiding in the
pass :

Ay, it tears their jagged mountain into flint,
And it flings a flame of fire into the grass !
O the gun was made for busting ships at sea,
Which is work the Navy learns us men in blue ;
But the gun has ketched the land idea—and me ?
Well, I find as I am learning of it too.

12 THE SONG OF FIGHTING JACK

And it's truth I state, we will shoot as
straight

When the furriner drives at our iron freight,

When Thomas A. will be far away

Wanting to help—but it isn't his lay ;

Wars on sea are a different sprce,

They must bide their end with my gun and
me.

THE NAVY'S CRADLE

Dedicated to the Boys of the Royal Hospital
School at Greenwich

TRAFALGAR ROAD in Greenwich runs out of Nelson
Street,

And it's there the Navy's cradle may be seen,
Where the little Jack is nurtured who will one
day man our Fleet,

And it's O he'll keep the decks of England
clean.

At the desk in sombre serges while a nibbled pen
he sucks

Jacky's learning how to read and how to
write,

And with cutlass and with carbine in his varie-
gated ducks

He is learning how to drill and how to fight.

He can pedal at a Singer when it comes to stitch-
ing clothes,

He can knot and he can splice and he can
cook,

He is carpenter and blacksmith, and the jolly
youngster knows

Every signal in the Royal Navy's book ;

All the flags of all the nations Master Jack has
got in stock,

And it's O the things they've packed into
his mind,

He can make the toughest paunch-mat, mend a
window or a sock,
And he's up to all the dodges of the wind.

He has names we never hear of for the common
things of life,

And he doesn't always call a mop a mop,
It's a chunk of toke he butters with his Govern-
mental knife,

But the butter is not butter, it is flop ;
O'er his shirt he wears a jumper, on his head he
sticks a goss—

Such a playful little humour he has got !
He's a mason, he's a baker, and he's only at a
loss

When you order him to tell you what he's
not.

He can march like gallant Gordons, he can drill
like Joe Marines,

And his father's little quicker in a boat,

He's as proud as any gunner that his jacket is the
Queen's,

And he swims—about as nat'ral as a float.

With his toys of guns and rigging jolly Jacky
loves to romp

In the rooms that smell o' cordage and o'
tar,

While his nurses preach the gospel and the glory
and the pomp

Of the life aboard a British Man-o'-War.

You may sail the wide world over but you'll never
clap your eyes

On a cradle like the crib where Jacky crows,

And you'll never find a bantling half so cunning
and so wise

As the little chap who lies in it and grows.

With his goss pulled on his eyebrows, in his ducks
o' doubtful white,

With his chubby hands laid easy on his hips,
He is waiting till we tell him that it's time to go
and fight—

That we'll trust him with Britannia's pretty
ships.

O the joyful waves come leaping to the shingle
and the sand,

Rock the cradle, rock the cradle, Jack's asleep!

O the gallant Fleet's abuilding which will answer
to his hand

When he's rocking in the cradle of the deep ;

When he's rocking in the cradle where the ships
of England go,

Where they went in valiant days of wood
and sail ;

O there's steam upon the ocean, but the iron
line's aglow

With the blood of ancient days that cannot
fail !

KNIGHT O' THE SEA

HE rides through raving storm to-day, like knight
with helm and shield,

Lord o' the sea redressing wrongs he rides, he
rides afield ;

The stinging salt is in his face, the wind screams
past his ear

As the good steed leaps through roaring waves
like a lusty light-limbed deer.

Knight o' the Sea he rides afield to keep the
open road

Where the trader comes with an English song
astride of his golden load,

From Auckland up to Plymouth Sound the path
is swept and clean

By the man who rides on the horse that wears
the harness of the Queen.

His armour is a suit o' blue and he wears no
iron mask,

But his lady's colours are there to see on his
royal sea-drenched casque ;

His royal sea-drenched casque, my lads, where
writ in solemn gold

Flames "Terrible" as "Temeraire" flamed in
the days of old.

Light was his heart and glad his eye—but clenched
his iron fists—

When far afield the clarion rang shrill challenge
to the lists ;

O then he rode with dripping spurs, till drenched
in frothing spray

He swung his charger up and drew the rein in
Durban Bay.

He guards the Ocean as he goes through wildering
fields of foam,

But never a hand steals through to force the
fastening of his Home,

And safe from jealous plunderer our England
takes her sleep

While her Knight o' the Sea on his royal steed
rides over the open Deep.

His armour is a suit o' blue and he wears no
iron mask,

But his lady's colours are there to see on his
royal sea-drenched casque ;

His royal sea-drenched casque, my lads, where
writ in solemn gold
Flames "Powerful" as "Victory" flamed in
the days of old.

OUR IMPOSING FLEET

[“ If such returns are to be published they should certainly exclude from the list of British warships a number of vessels which no one would think of sending into action on any terms whatever.”—*Morning Post*.]

THE Lords of the British Navy sat down with
their pens in hand,
And they made a list of the ships at sea and the
ships that are yet to be manned ;
They wrote them down and they drew a line, and
they added them fair and neat,
O never before, said the smiling Lords, could we
show such a beautiful Fleet !

There were battleships, destroyers, gun-boats,
cruisers, coast-defence,

O the might of Nelson's Britain on the
sea !

And with ninety odd torpedo-boats let carp-
ing critics grieve

That the total under "Special" comes to
three !

But the Lords of the British Navy stuffed into
their mighty list

A bevy o' ships that a man might split with a
blow from his knuckled fist,

And some of the boats were decrepit and the
tackle was obsolete,

But the Lords of the Navy totted 'em up with
the best of the British Fleet !

There were battleships, destroyers, gun-boats,
cruisers, coast-defence,

O the total of the aggregated tons !

And with such a lot of vessels does it matter
if a few

Do their barking out o' muzzle-loading
guns !

The man of the British Navy can handle the best
o' craft :

He would fight to the last with his cutlass out if
he stood on a tin-tack raft,

And the time for the crippled cruiser to go where
the Navies meet

Won't come, my Lords, till the halt and the maim
are manning the British Fleet !

Give us battleship, destroyer, gun - boat,
cruiser, coast-defence,

That are worth the lion's heart and iron
wrist ;

Take your red-ink quill and ruler, bow you
o'er the desk again—

Strike the Hypocrite and Hoary off' the
list !

WOOD AND STEEL

*OLD names that live in story,
New names on many lips,
The old and new one glory—
The fame of British ships !
The “ Victory ” and “ Powerful,”
White sail and drifting smoke ;
The “ Temeraire ” and “ Terrible,”
New steel and ancient oak.*

When England rode to battle on Neptune's open
plain
With Howard, Drake, and Frobisher to sweep the
troubled main,

When good Queen Bess ruled England, with eighty
ship a-sail

The strength of Spain was broken and strown
upon the gale.

When England rode to battle and Nelson served
the King,

Still went she forth in ships o' wood with canvas
fluttering,

And with the valiant *Victory* and fighting
Temeraire

Swept through the Frenchman's double line and
stripped his glory bare.

With rent and ragged rigging, with smashed and
splintered mast,

Her wooden sides ripped open, she gripped the
foeman fast,

And through the swirl of waters, and through the
lashing gale,

Brought back the prize to old Spithead in days o'
wood and sail.

Now goes she swift and sudden and knits the
separate zones,

With mail of steel patrolling the vasty world she
owns,

With *Powerful* and *Terrible*, with *Blenheim* and
with *Blake*—

Lo! England guards the ancient way of Nelson
and of Drake.

When War heaps high his furnace and England
tries the steel,

God prove it honest metal from coming-tower to
keel,

God grant in Armageddon we strike the ancient
stroke—

'Neath England's steel alive and true the British
heart of oak.

LIBERTY JACK

(LONDON, EASTER 1900)

I SAW him tumble out of the train in his jacket of
navy blue,
Hero of Ladysmith landing safe in the bustle of
Waterloo,
And *bang, bang, bang* went the slamming doors,
guards whistled, and engines screamed
While he stood in the whirl of the surging throng
and buttoned his jacket and beamed ;
He carried his luggage all serene in a handkerchief
neatly tied,

And the schoolboy getting a play-box out looked
up at his cap with pride,—
Looked at the Name perched over the keen, blue
eyes of Liberty Jack,—
Letters of faded gold that loomed on a ribbon of
rusty black.

Home again from fighting, home from battle's
toil,
Standing glad and hearty once again on
English soil,
Merry as a schoolboy, modest as a maid—
He who dragged his gun and lent a stricken
town his aid!

I saw him swing up a Surrey lane, his little red
load in his hand,

He blew great clouds from his pipe to sail o'er
the ripple of meadow-land,
He held his head in the air and drew the breath
of the soil to his lungs
As he strode to the village that gave him birth,
and the music of English tongues ;
I saw him pause at a cottage door, under a roof
of thatch,
Pause with a smile, for an eager hand was fumbling
the clumsy latch.
Then I heard the door on its hinges creak,—a cry,
and a sudden run ;
And the mother had opened her trembling arms
and gathered her gallant son.

Home again from fighting, home from off
the sea,

Kissing dear old mother with the children
round his knee,

Joining in the laughter, leading in the
game—

He who manned his gun and saved a town
from bitter shame.

HYMN FOR FEDERATION

God save the Queen that she may see
The Federation of the Free ;
This be Thy crown upon her life,
The issue of our righteous strife ;
God save the Queen that she may bless
The union of the numberless.

When doubting hearts grew faint with fear,
Her children o'er the seas drew near,
God draw them nearer till they stand
Confederate with the Mother Land,
One nation, one in aim and birth,
Shoulder to shoulder circling Earth.

36 HYMN FOR FEDERATION

Let not her reign unfinished run,
Knit all her kingdoms into one :
Let not alone the trump of war
Unite her children scattered far ;
Lord, bring them in, to stand with pride
About the Queen in peace allied.

This be high Heaven's last reward
For all her faithful service, Lord,
'This 'Thy great dower on her days
Whose pomp was in 'Thy prayer and praise—
God save her, that her eyes may see
The Great Communion of the Free !

THE ANSWER

OVER the world that has waited long the whisper
of panic runs :

Listen ! the tramp of the armies, the clang of the
gathering guns,

The scorn of the jealous nations, the laugh of the
land that hates,

The snarl of the hungry peoples, the shriek of the
crumbling states !

Over the world that has watched the sea the
whisper of panic runs,

And England stretches her arms abroad and
gathers her lusty sons,

Gathers them out of the glowing East, out of the
loyal West,
Out of the North and out of the South, and stands
with her heart at rest.

Never a boast or a foolish word, they gather about
her knee.

What is the answer made to the world? It is
here for the world to see :

The silent strength of a scattered line stretched
over the ancient land,

An army streaming across the world that gathers
without command.

For the race that have 'stablished freedom, and
made their paths thro' the flood,

Have won their Right by their spirits' sweat, by
their bodies' living blood,

And what they have won by soul and sword, by
soul and sword they keep,
Tho' the Navies flash from a thousand ports and
strike for the sundering Deep.

BROUGHT FORWARD

(THE VOLUNTEER)

HE has buckled on his armour, and his coat-tails
folded lie

In the painted chest of drawers beside the bed ;
And he doesn't wear a topper with a dickey and
a tie,

But he's crammed a jaunty war-hat on his head ;
In his swing is all the swagger of the British
Grenadier,

In his eye is all the challenge of the Line,
And he'll look a martial veteran when he meets
us all next year

With a medal on his tunic for a sign.

March away, march away ; O the rattle
of the drum,

O the thrill of blaring trumpets —
March away !

From the office in Cheapside to the trooper
on the tide

And the trenches where the buzzing
bullets play.

He is singing warlike ballads, he is bending o'er
the map,

And he bucks of Bobs, and Kitchener, and
White,

He has found the proper angle for his toes and
for his cap,

And his bursting heart is spoiling for the
fight !

O the ancient Easter Mondays lie behind him
mean and tame,
For the bugle that is ringing calls to work
Where the wage is paid by glory and the praise is
dealt by fame,
And the burden isn't one a man will shirk.

March away, march away; O the scream-
ing of the shells,
O the rain of hidden Mausers—March
away !
From the city's fog and slush to the sudden
bayonet rush
And the blow that wins the laurels of
the day.

There's a little wife in Clapham with a baby in a
pram,

She is spending rather less on shopping now,
And she does not meet her husband by a crowded
scarlet tram

That comes tinkling in the twilight to the
Plough;

In the parlour there's a portrait of a gallant youth
in grey,

With an order that was posted from Pall
Mall,

And she talks to all the neighbours in a military
way

Of "My husband with the Army in Natal."

March away, march away; O the home
he's left behind,

O the cradle in the nursery—March
away!

From the irksome daily round to the field
where volleys sound,
And the might of England gathers for
the fray.

A SONG IN CAMP

THERE'S one can tell of the grizzly bear,

And one of the kangaroo,

Over the borders we've come with our orders,

We know what we're here to do ;

For we all of us live in the same big house,

Though each has his own little wing,

And when obstinate nations attack the foundations

We all come together and sing :

For England, for England, the cradle of our
line,

The lances ride and the rifles ring and the
scattered sons combine :

For England, for England. We fling our
strength between

The Empire and the Danger for our England
and the Queen.

There's some that come from a Melbourne
shop,

Some that were bred in Quebec,

Some from a prairie, and some from a dairy,

And some from the *Terrible's* deck ;

And some of us marched from the counter of
Coutts,

And some from a constable's beat,

But we're all thrown together in khaki and
leather—

We sing the same song when we meet :

For England, for England, the cradle of our
line,

The lances ride and the rifles ring and the
scattered sons combine :

For England, for England. We fling our
strength between

The Empire and the Danger for our England
and the Queen.

And when we've done what we're here to do,

And the ships go east and west,

Each with his story of hardship and glory—

And little brown holes in his chest,

We shall think o' the nights when we smoked our
clays

And lay on our backs in a ring,

Weary-worn after battle but making a rattle

With the song that was easy to sing :

For England, for England, the cradle of our
line,

The lances ride and the rifles ring and the
scattered sons combine :

For England, for England. We fling our
strength between

The Empire and the Danger for our England
and the Queen.

ALL TOGETHER

(BY THE MAN IN THE STREET)

HERE's a song of the men who fight for England
and the Queen,
Canada lads, Australia boys, Tommy, and Joe the
Marine,
English, Irish, Scotchmen, and Welsh, and Jack
from off the sea,
All of 'em marching, and sweating, and fighting
for fellows like you and me ;
D'you think at night when you're safe in bed of
the work they've got to do,

D'you dream of shells that leap in the sky and
pass your ear with a *shoo!*

D'you think, dear friend, when you curse the rain,
and swear when the breakfast's late,
Of the men who run to the fumes of hell and
rattle their guns at the gate?

All together! all together! that's their
motto,

All together, all together, that's their cry!
Oh, they know there's work to do, that
they're bound to see it through,
And it's "All together—together—Do or
Die!"

Here's a song of the men who die for England
and the Queen,

Not so good as they ought to be, says a very
reverend Dean ;

Not so good as they ought to be ! Is it a time
to cuss ?

I'll not look for the scarlet stain on souls that
are dying for us !

Here's enough for the likes o' me—the Death
they've got to face,

Face they do with a song of joy—and God will
provide the grace ;

Here's enough for the likes o' me,—*theirs* the
Hand that strips

The tyrant's might in the open day and strikes
the lie from his lips !

All together ! all together ! march our
brothers,

Bearing Freedom on their bayonets as
they go,
Search by Modder's trampled banks—not a
coward in the ranks!
And they've scattered, and they've shattered,
England's foe.

OUR MEN

[“ *The Men are Splendid.*”—SIR REDVERS BULLER.]

How shall it trouble, the moment's check? For
the hearts of the men are true,

True as they were when the volleys rang o'er the
grasses of Waterloo,

True as they were when the millions rose and
struck at the British Raj,

True as they were when the Cossack guns roared
scorn to Cardigan's “Charge!”

Do ye ask why the nation's heart is calm through
the long-drawn racking days ?

Why is there light in the people's eyes ? and peace
in the people's ways ?

Is the General checked by a shrouded foe ? Is he
caught in his cunning hold ?

How shall it trouble ? Our men are true as they
were in the days of old !

They will wait as the nation waits, in faith ; they
will wait for the hour of doom,

Never a grumble and never a doubt, and never an
hour of gloom ;

Full of the strength that is very life, they wait in
a valiant trust

To answer the check with the blow that routs and
shatters the foe to dust !

As they lie in the trenches, gun in hand, they sing
of their land and race,
Sing to the tune of the screaming shells, with the
blinding sun in their face,
And they shout with joy when the order comes to
spring to the battle's shock,
And drive the foe at the bayonet-point from his
burrowing lines in the rock.

They will climb in the night up the ambushed
hill, they will charge in the burning sun ;
They will thirst thro' the day, they will freeze
thro' the night, they will stand by the splin-
tered gun ;
They will face the hail of the hissing lead, they
will charge on the hidden hosts ;

They will fight with a song on their parching
lips, and die with a smile at their posts :

These are the men who have walked our streets
in the years of a languid peace,
Who have learned their drill on the barrack
square, and longed for their time's release ;
Boys from the slums of our crowded towns, lads
from the drowsy farm—
Men of a race that never fears, and the Empire's
strong right arm !

THE DAY'S WORK

It's a business getting up Snowdon, when you're
fresh from your morning bath,

With a sandwich tin and a whisky flask and the
sun on your beaten path :

But it's harder work for the muscles, and a stiffer
job for the bones,

Climbing up hundreds of mountain feet when
most of the feet are stones !

Climbing it, too, in the darkness, with a gun for
an alpenstock,

Slipping and tripping, and waiting to hear the
rifle's ping from the rock.

Slipping and tripping, but panting on, up thro'
the silent night,

With the sweat running over your hand to your
gun and trickling on to the sight.

But what of the end of the journey, when you're
"safe" on the mountain top,

And the sun peeps out of the dewy East—and the
shells in a welcome pop?

When there isn't an hour to enjoy the view and
examine your broken shins,

When the foe leaps up on the other side and the
work of the day begins?

Ah! that is the crown of the climbing for the
sons of a Northern race,

Look at the joy and the triumph's light that
shines in each sweating face!

Up thro' the pitchy darkness, up the embattled
height,

Up to the rays of the rising sun, and the dawn
of the long day's fight.

BULLER'S BULLDOGS

Not like a flame of fire
Swept they to glory,
But when shall Britons tire
Telling their story?
Men who with dogged heart,
Balked, torn, and riven,
Held to the bulldog's part,
Foiled, but not driven.

Stayed at the shattered bridge,
See the line quiver!
Hurled from the mountain ridge,
Swept from the river,

Backward and back they fall,

Face to the foeman,—

Fire of the ancient Gaul,

Heart of the Roman !

Grimly the bastions rise

Rock-ridged and solemn !

But where the foe that lies

Raking the column ?

Up the sheer height they scale,

Brother cheers brother,

Up to the crest—to fail,

Swept from another !

Down to the silent plain,

Bitter their curses,

Down, but to grip again,

Scorning reverses ;

Stern-eyed they dig each bed,
 Counting the number,
Hard-lipped they leave the Dead
 Smiling in slumber.

Then to the battle's shock—

 Hark to the thunder !
Buttress of jagged rock
 Bursting asunder !
Red is the foaming tide,
 Red, stones and grasses—
On, on, they rush and ride
 Into hell's passes !

On till the task is done,
 Balked, torn, and riven,
On till the end is won,
 Foiled, but not driven.

Men of the ancient breed,
 Shot through, but clinching,
Grappling with hands that bleed,
 Dogged, unflinching !

Not like a flame of fire
 Swept they to glory,
But when shall Britons tire
 Telling their story ?
Tale of the men who fought
 Asking no pity,
Ay, inch by inch, and brought
 Help to a city.

MAJUBA DAY

O BOBS, it was a dreary day until you came and
spoke,

The drizzle dripped so silent and the air it made
us choke,

For the wind had quit the city, and the rain it
fell and fell,

And the gloom was like the moments when a
sexton tolls his bell.

But you spoke, light-footed captain, and the town
began to smile,

We could see the streets and 'buses all a-grinning
for a mile !

And the club forgot the climate, and the clerk
forgot his till,

And they talked of little Roberts—and a distant
stricken hill ;

Of a hill where England sorrows, and has shed her
mother tears,

Through the weary, weary waiting of the bitter,
bitter years,

Of a hill where trembling statesmen dug our
honour's shallow grave—

Dried our blood with coward parchment and
bowed down before a knave !

You put heart into the squadrons when they stand
in grim array—

You gave heart to England's Empire when you
kept Majuba Day!

And the cheer that gives you answer rolls its
thunder from afar—

From the muddy streets of London, from the
heights of Kandahar.

.

His aching loss he put away with firm and patriot
hand,

Tearless the veteran turned from home to serve
his Queen and land,

And the love he bears for England steeled the
hand and nerved the brain

To the blow which broke rebellion, cleared our
honour of its stain!

.

THE DESERTER

(A PRIVATE'S CONFIDENCE)

HE hadn't the heart for the barrack-square, nor
the hour in the Riding School,

He broke it rubbing an old bridoon and a horse
that would never get cool ;

The corporal's tongue in the room was sharp, for
his shelf was a sorry place,

With his boots in kinks from the foot to the knee,
and as dull as a busby case ;

There wasn't a awkwarder gawk in the troop at
making a tidy bed,

The pipe-clay got in his tunic-braid and there
wasn't no quiff on his head,
The sergeant sneered and the captain frowned and
the Room they treated him hard,
So one dark night when the Rounds yawned by
they was short of a stable-guard.

His kit was found at his horse's heels, and we
spotted the nick in the wall
Where he'd clambered up by the farrier's shop, and
dropped on his pusher's¹ shawl ;
But they didn't hustle to fetch him back, for the
adjutant got the wink—
There was better men than a swob like him to take
their ease in the clink.

¹ Nursemaid, one who pushes a perambulator ; applied
to any sweetheart.

So he got a job on a Yorkshire farm, and he
carried the pigs their wash,
He nursed the foal that had strangles bad, and he
coddled the cow with closh ;
They gave him a cottage with fourteen bob, his
work was the worst of the lot,
And he married the ugliest maid in the place, and
she called him a drunken sot.

But the bugles rang, and the village talked, and he
borrowed the farmer's *Post*,
He spelled it through with a muttering lip and a
face that was white as a ghost ;
He spelled it through, and he slunk away, and his
missus called at the inn,
And just at the edge of her apron peeped the end
of a rolling-pin !

But he wasn't there—he was far away, and he's
farther away by now,

Riding a horse that would split in two if you
hitched him on to a plough,

Riding a horse at the back of French, riding him
straight and well,

With a lance that drives like a flame of fire through
the guttering lines of Hell.

Now he wasn't the man who could understand the
grind of the Army mill—

Why the tongue of a buckle must gleam like a bit,
with the first six months of it drill,

He hadn't the mind that is quick and clean, that
is swift when it's just—Obey,

And he isn't so good as the men who last, who go
through the mill, and stay.

And this is his due: he is out with the rest, and
he knew it was right to go,
He has run away from the barrack-square, and he
won't run away from the foe;
And when it is over he'll slouch away to the peace
of a dalesman's life,
He'll carry the buckets of wash to the pigs, and his
fourteen bob to his wife.

AN INCIDENT

IN his uniform soaking and draggled, with the
blood in his sleepless eyes,
Hungry and dirty and bearded, he looks at the
morning skies,
He feels for his pipe in the blanket, he calls to his
chum for a light—
When a bugle sounds on the chilling air, and he
stands in his boots upright.

There is jingling of chains and the straining of
harness, the clashing of steel,
And the gunner swings off at a gallop as he buckles
the spur to his heel,
There are whispers, and jestings, and laughter—
then the scream of a rushing shell
And the crash of the guns from the trenches that
fling back the gateways of Hell.

In his uniform soaking and grimy he stands with
his gun in his place,
While the bullets peck at the riven ground and
spit up the earth in his face ;
He stands as he stood in a scarlet coat with a crowd
at the barrack gate,
But the colonel knows what his heart is at, and he
whispers : “ It’s coming. Wait ! ”

So he glares at the smoke from the trenches, so he
 chats to his chum on his right,

Muddy and thirsty and frozen—but setting his
 teeth for the fight,

And he stands like a rock through the morning
 with the butt of his gun at his toe—

Till the bugles ring and he leaps to the front with
 his bayonet-point at the foe.

To the mouth of the sputtering cannon, to the
 ridge where the rifles flame,

On! with a shout that is strong as the blow—
 though he's tortured and spent and lame,

Through the line of the reeling foemen, through
 the hail of the hissing lead—

He wins to the rocks with his bayonet-point and
 staggers among the dead.

In his uniform soaking and tattered he lies with
the mist in his eyes,
The sun has set and the air is still, but he looks
no more on the skies ;
The lips of the cannon are frothless, there is rest
in the worn brigade,
And the only sound on the stricken field is the
noise of his comrade's spade.

BATTLE PRIESTS

THESE are God's witnesses who stand
Where weeping England counts her loss,
Who lift with firm and holy hand
High o'er the battle Jesu's Cross ;

And 'mid the swaying armies drown
War's angry clang with words of Life,
Bringing to those the eternal Crown
Slain in the momentary strife.

How beautiful the feet that go

Where the shell shocks the unshielded line !

Soothing the soldier's dying throe

With comfortable Bread and Wine.

O while the legions crash and reel,

Triumphant hear them name the Name,

Breathing the living Words that steal

Like music through the burning frame.

Death threats them on the echoing ground

And from the riven air above,

What time the warrior hears the sound

O'er volleying peal of Heaven's love.

Death beats their faces with his breath,
 Mocks them with discord of the strife ;
But not for them the fear of death
 Who are the messengers of Life.

Theirs not to win the flaming height
 With crimson lance and smoking sword,
Yet are they victors in the fight
 Led by their great Man-Loving Lord ;

And to the peaceful skies above,
 Up from the torn and twisted sod,
Wing the white souls they loose with love
 To testify the deed to God.

THE GOOD SAMARITANS

WHERE Britannia's flag is streaming,
Where the shot and shell are screaming,
Where the British brave are dying,
Where the Empire's dead are lying
 Pass the sons of Asian skies ;
In their hands no shield they carry,
With no lance the foe they harry,
But amid the crashing tourney
With a laden litter journey,
 And the light within their eyes

Would be understood, my brother,
By the tenderest English mother.

Not at Rajah's beck they render
To our Wounded care so tender ;
Not for them in England's story
Battle's splendid pomp and glory,
Hallowed by eternal Fame ;

But, the love of Queen inspiring,
Never fearing, never tiring,
Of the battle's burden sharers,
Pass the silent Indian bearers
Through the circling fire of flame—
Doers of a humble duty
Christ hath lit with radiant beauty.

.

English mother, arms out-reaching,

On thy knees High God beseeching

Succour for thy valiant son,

There are they who tend and cherish

Him that kills thee if he perish—

Hast thou, hast thou said, “Well done”?

R.A.M.C.

[“ It is most necessary here to say a word in praise of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who faced a hot fire all day long, going close up to the firing line to bring back our wounded. It seems almost incredible that during the day five hundred wounded men should have been brought back by the Medical Corps, though to get them back stretcher-bearers and searchers had to cross and re-cross a zone of fire at least a mile wide.”—WAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE *Morning Post* AT MAGERSFONTEIN.]

HE marches with the rest of us, he swaggers all
the way,
His step ain't right, but his boots is bright, and
he draws a soldier's pay,

He wears a kit of a perfect fit, and his figure is
just the one

To go ahead when the ranks outspread and the
bayonet's red on the gun ;

But when it's "Charge !" he stays behind—he
doesn't swarm no kop—

But don't you think that his morning drink is a
basin o' dribblin' sop,

He doesn't shy when the shots whizz by, nor he
doesn't shake when a shell

Splits over his head, and his friend falls dead who
was sound as a bloomin' bell.

Look at the doctor ! We don't look at him.

Not till a bone's disarranged in a limb ;

What he is doing ain't nothing to us,

What he is thinking, now, who cares a cuss ?

We must go fighting, and he must stand still,
Bust all the doctors until a chap's ill !

But when our leg is broke in half, and, truth, we
must go sick,

He joins the strife with his long lean knife, and
cuts at the wounded quick,

His words are short, but you can't pay court to
one of a hundred such,

And we don't grouse when he wastes his nous on
some of them groaning Dutch ;

O his hand it kind o' soothes the pain, when the
eyes see only red,

He stays behind, but he stays to bind a regular
splitting head,

And if we die of our scratches, why, it isn't his
bloomin' fault

Who stays behind (which is very kind) while we
carry the hot assault.

Go for the doctor, and mind where you tread,
Tell him I'm feeling that bad in my head,
Tell him the pills as I've swallowed ain't good,
Tell him I've lost lots o' flesh, likewise blood,
Go for the doctor, and tell him come quick,
Fetch up old Sawbones, a Tommy's gone sick.

In barracks, morning stables done, on Saturday
he comes,

We have to show our chests in a row, and he
looks between our thumbs,

We don't go sick for a horse's kick, but a bite
when you're bending down

Will make you feel as you're goin' to peel from
the ball of your foot to your crown ;
And so we go to hospital, and if he orders port
A man lies low. "Are you better?" "No,"
you ought to hear us snort !
But it's hard to stick when another's sick—there's
a empty bed in the room,
And worser still, when we've finished drill, there's
another old hoss to groom !

But, here's to the man of the R.A.M.C.,
Buzzing about on the field like a bee,
Tending the wounded where lead's flying hot,
Biting his lip when he gets hisself shot ;
Brave as the best of us, hurt and not tell,
Doctor he may be—he's soldier as well.

OLD B.-P.

(A CARTHUSIAN SONG)

ONCE he was a little beggar, just like me and you,
Playing footer, fives, and cricket, hashing Virgil,
too;

Pr'aps upon this form he squatted, dipped into
this ink,

Scuffled on this floor like we do when we try to
think;

Now he's sitting on a rampart, field-glass in his
hand,

Watching chaps who want his village burrowing
in the sand ;

Now he's storming forts and trenches, reading
printers' "proofs,"

Always keeping Jack a-flying over spluttered
roofs !

Then here's to the old Carthusian boy,

Just like me and you,

He's certain to stick it, and keep up his
wicket,

And pull the whole garrison through !

Then here's to the old Carthusian boy,

Just like you and me,

He can fight, play the fool, and he's proud
of the School—

So here's to old B.-P.

Once he conjugated *Vinco*, just like you and me !
Drew a map of Europe, swatted at the Rule of
Three,
Whistled o'er the playground, rolled the duffer in
the dirt,
Wore to chapel, just like we do, topper and clean
shirt ;
Now he's eating chunks of horses, hardly closing lids,
Fighting chaps who fire on women, shell the little
kids ;
Now he sallies out to meet them, breaks the
cordon down,
Keeps old England's flag still flying o'er the tin-
pot town.

Then here's to the old Carthusian boy,
Just like me and you ;

We know he will stick it, and keep up his
wicket,

And jolly well pull 'em all through !

Then here's to the old Carthusian boy,

Just like you and me ;

He can fight, play the fool, and he's proud
of the School—

So here's to old B.-P.

When a dozen years are over, you and I may be
Holding towns or ruling niggers, just like old
B.-P.,

Shaving every day, and puffing whacking big
cheroots,

Gold lace round our caps and jingling spurs on
shiny boots.

O I see him on his rampart grinning at the foe,

Keeping up his people's spirits, dancing at a
 "show,"

Nursing wounded yelling kiddies, soothing mothers'
 fears—

Hope I shall be something like him in a dozen
 years !

O here's to the old Carthusian boy,
 Just like me and you.

Who doubts that he'll stick it and keep up
 his wicket,

And jolly well pull 'em all through ?

Then here's to the old Carthusian boy,
 Just like you and me ;

He can fight, play the fool, and he's proud
 of the School—

So here's to old B.-P.

THE IMMORTAL HANDFUL

(MAFEKING, *May* 1900)

SHOUT for the desperate host,
 Handful of Britain's race,
Holding the lonely post
 Under God's grace ;
Guarding our England's fame
 Over the open grave,
Shielding the Flag from shame—
 Shout for the brave !

Ringed by a ruthless foe
 Dared they the night attack,
Answered him blow for blow,
 Hurling him back ;

Cheering, the charge was pressed,
More than they held they hold,
Won bayonet at the breast—
Shout for the bold !

Long, long the days and nights ;
Bitter the tales that came ;
What of the distant fights ?
Rumours of shame ?
Scorning the doubts that swell,
Nursing the hope anew,
They did their duty well—
Shout for the true !

Shout for the glory won,
Empire of East and West !
Shout for each valiant son
Nursed at thy breast !

94 THE IMMORTAL HANDFUL

Fear could not find them out,

Death stalked there iron-shod,

Help found them Victors—shout

Praises to God !

PRETORIA BOBS

Be sure the man who can sit and wait

Is he who can move when he likes ;

O it's lightning flash and the devil's own smash

When he jumps to his feet and strikes ;

When he jumps to his feet and strikes, brave
boys,

O the other man reels and spins,

Lay your money on Bobs when you're talking of
jobs

Where the man that is wisest wins.

Puffing out of Waterloo to fair Southampton's
dock,
Steaming into Table Bay punctual as a clock,
Wiping out Majuba Day, careful of the date,
Just a year since Kruger's plot we're knocking at
his gate !

Now the Army's Chief is a statesman wise,
He is quick with the sword and pen,
But the work of his brain had been waste and
vain
If he hadn't led British men ;
If he hadn't led British boys (Mark time !),
O hear what the war-drum throbs :
“ We haven't a name, but we'll live in Fame
As the Men who marched out with Bobs.”

Steamers bound for Table Bay from Melbourne
and Quebec,

All the kingdoms of the Queen run to meet the
Check,

All the Empire one in heart, Kruger bruits his
brag,

Just a year since Europe hoped—Pretoria flies
the Flag!

O slow to the strife but swift with the blow

Is our way in the quarrel just,

And it's never let go of the slippery foe

Till he's bitten his own red dust ;

Till he's bitten his own red dust, brave boys,

Till he's swallowed his brazen brag,

Till the land is freed by the Lion's bold breed

And Tyranny bows to the Flag.

Marching up from Bloemfontein to Mr. Kruger's
town,

England's banner floating there, never coming
down,

Hammered is the traitor foe, now the slate is
clean,

Just a year—Pretoria shouts with us, "God save
the Queen!"

TO COLONEL PLUMER¹

FROM THE MAN IN THE STREET

WE get a word of Buller, and little snips from
French,

We hear of shells that split a fort and rake a
bloomin' trench ;

But the man we want to hear of, what we've got
to hear of, too,

Is a little bloke called Plumer—Colonel Plumer—
which is you.

¹ Colonel Plumer—an old campaigning friend of the hero of Mafeking—after encountering many difficulties reached Mafeking and received the grateful congratulations of Baden-Powell.

I couldn't tell you why it is, but for the likes o'
me

There's a kind o' fancy feelin' for the chap they
call B.-P.,

And they tell me that the only man to help him
put it thro'

Is a little bloke called Plumer—Colonel Plumer—
which is you.

So hustle, Mister Plumer, lace your boots and
pack your grub,

It's a hundred days and over that he's kep' the
Boers outside ;

So be sharp and move your bones, march away
from Gaberones,

Put your foot into the stirrup, shake your
charger's reins, and ride.

You've got a chance you'll never beat, however old
you grow,

A chance to ride to glory, but don't you ride too
slow,

For the man you've got to get at is a man as
mustn't fall,

He's a man what's fighting desperate with his back
against the wall;

He's a man what keeps his heart up, sends a joke
by telegraph,

But it ain't the joke that makes a man feel burstin'
full of larf;

There's a something in his spirit which is different
from the rest,

An' it's no use my explainin', but we likes ole
Baden best.

So hustle, Mister Plumer, stir your stumps,
sir, make a move,
It's a hundred days and over that he's had to
sit and wait ;
Oh, you may have foes in front and a lot o'
things to shunt,
But you've got to watch it careful that you
don't arrive too late.

THE BEARER

I STUMBLED ; the squadrons roared by me ; I fell
on my face,

Clutched gasping the dust that I reddened—then
looked on God's grace !

Looked up from the hell of the battle, looked up
and beheld

The Crown of sharp Thorns, the sad Beauty. And
I had rebelled.

In His arms did He lift me and hold me, my lips
did He kiss,

And He bore me away on His bosom ; I was
drowning in bliss ;

For the earth slid away as a garment, the clouds
swept asunder,

God's universe bared itself stark with loud crash-
ings of thunder,

And there mid the myriad spheres, mid the
manifold suns

All ablaze in the space whose infinitude baffles and
stuns,

I rose on the breast of my Saviour, like dew from
the sod

That is drawn to heights white with the dizzying
nearness of God ;

And as Thought lifts the soul out of sorrow and
bears it above,

Till the tares of the world wither caught in the
radiance of Love—

So I rose from the shock of the battle, from the
clash and the din

Unconscious of all save the greatness, forgetting
my sin ;

And the hymn of the Blessed in Heaven descended
and thrilled

All the stars with great music like colour—like
golden drops spilled

On a floor that is sapphire and crystal—such
sounds as in sleep

Through the brain like the rush of glad spirits
triumphantly sweep ;

And the fear that had thrall'd me uplifted, as a
babe on the breast

Slipping into soft slumber, I lay in Christ's arms,
full of rest,

Till the fulness of ecstasy whelmed me—I wept, I
adored :

Take away mine offence ! Let me love Thee for
ever, Christ Lord !

All sudden the glory swooned backward ; song
ceased, far away

Drew the pitying Eyes, fading swiftly like stars
before day ;

Yet the wounded Hand lay in my own, ah ! close
to my breast,

And I cried to him clinging : Lord, give me again
of Thy Rest !

Then blackness ! I swung through dark clouds, I
swayed back from Death's brink—

Lo, my hands clasped the hand of an Indian who
gave me to drink.

IN THE GARDEN AT KHARTOUM

[For many weeks subscriptions towards the Gordon Statue at Khartoum were only sufficient to pay for the pedestal.]

THE sun beats down upon the land,
The sad acacia droops her head,
Beneath her leaves, beneath the sand,
Sleeps the imperishable Dead ;
Above, the sunbeams dance and wink,
Below, thick darkness—where alone
He lies and hears the rhythmic clink
Of chisel striking on the stone—
And voices in his garden ground
Of men who clear the tangled soil,

108 IN THE GARDEN AT KHARTOUM

And all the happy English sound

Of busy labourers at their toil.

The moon climbs Heaven ; from out his sleep

He wakes to walk among the flowers,

About the broken paths that keep

Memorial of his martyred hours,

And lo ! above the grave he sees,

Reared from the littered, trodden sands,

A plinth amid the citron trees—

A plinth whereon no Figure stands !

And from the Nile a whisper blows,

A shudder passes o'er the place,

Night's brooding darkness darker grows,

And the great spirit shrouds his face.

“FROM PLAGUE, PESTILENCE, AND
FAMINE—”

Nor with shell and lance and sabre may ye turn
the flank of these—

Evil spirits smiting India to the marrow with
disease.

Sweep they o'er the withered region, swifter than
the meteor's flight,

Wounding in the parching suntime, piercing in
the woful night.

Desolate and scarred their pathway, all the toil
and labour vain,

Famine's scouts with poisoned breathing blight the
fruit and waste the grain.

Stripped the iron earth and naked, bare as Khyber's
jagged pass,

And the sun above the dying beating from a sky
of brass.

On the mother's arid bosom crack the wailing
infant's lips,

Blue and rigid ere the death-dew from the gasping
mother drips.

PESTILENCE, AND FAMINE— " 111

In the dust the strong man whimpers, whirling
fleshless arms to God,
Spectre fingers clutching wildly, beating back the
flaming rod.

Death, and worse than death, the torture aching
through the burning hours,
Hunger, hunger, hunger, hunger—fiercest of the
hidden Powers !

Famine stalking through the cities,—but behind it
pressing hard
Those who in the wildering Empire keep for
England watch and ward.

Not with shell and lance and sabre, not with
squadrons spreading far,
Do they break the arms of Famine in the pomp
and zest of War.

Silent as the foe they combat, spurred not by the
public praise,
Fight the sons of English mothers in the stricken
Asian ways.

Driving Famine backward, backward, by the
cunning of the brain,
By the soul that never falters, never dreams
endeavour vain.

Ah ! the grimness of the battle ! Ah ! the silence
of the strife !

Ah ! the courage of the fighters wrestling Death
for alien Life !

Ye who see in dreams the warfare, see the grisly
heaps of Dead,

Hear ye not the voice of India wailing, “ England,
give me bread !

“ Bread for those your children succour where the
shafts of Famine fly ;

Be your largess as their valour, and my children
shall not die ! ”

QUEEN MOTHER

[Her Majesty visited London when the war in South Africa was at a critical stage.]

LOWLY she comes among her people, she
Whose name evokes a prayer on every sea,
Whose word, whose glance,
Kindles the knighthood in our northern veins,
Quickens old chivalry, and wakes the strains
Of dead romance.

Here is the mother at whose lightest breath
Men run to climb the flaming walls of death,
Run with a shout—

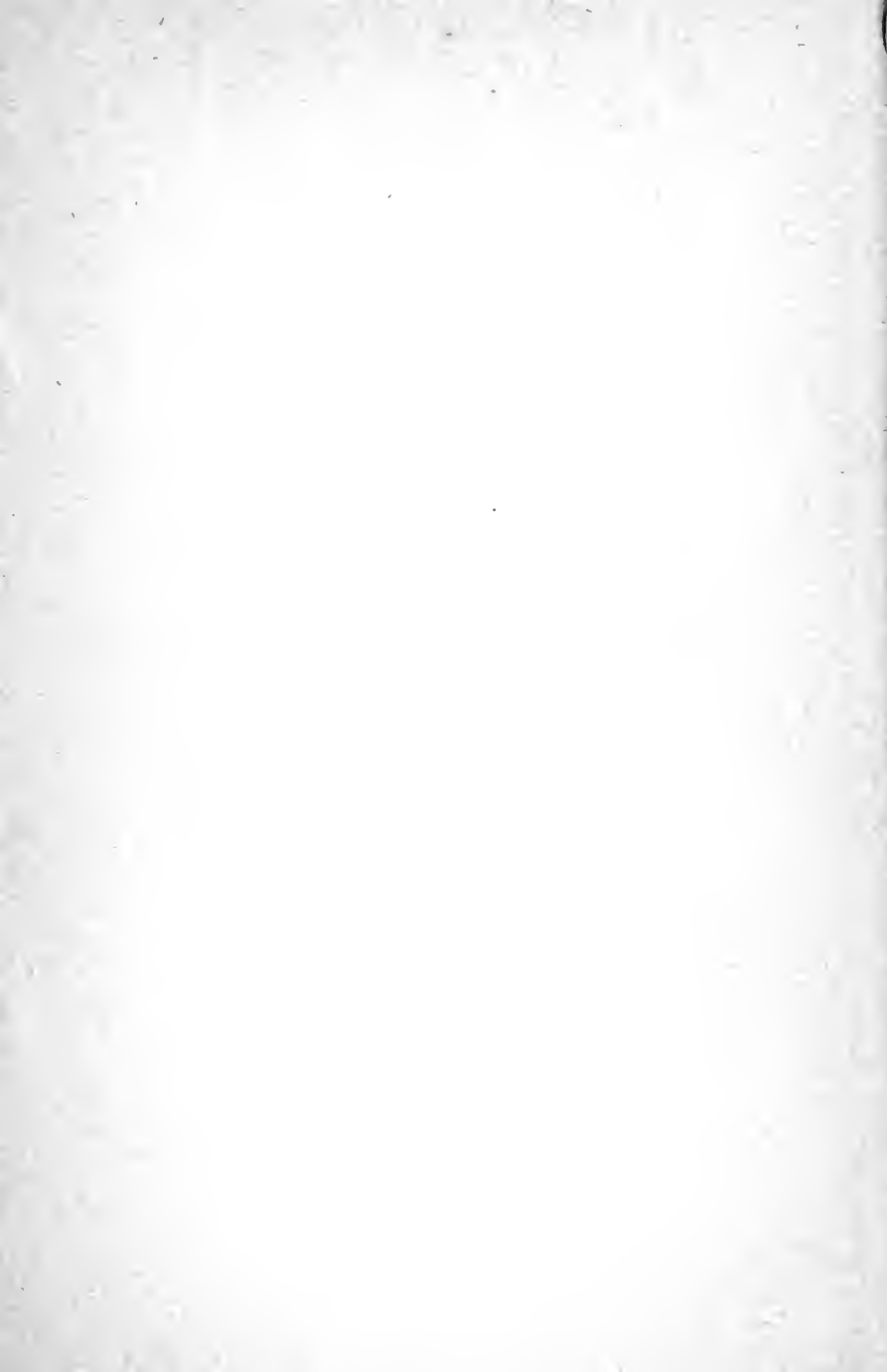
With eyes afire, with all the soul alive !
 For her to scale the volleying heights and drive
 The foeman out.

Here is the mother who has bowed and shed
 Tears for the widow and the valiant dead,
 Whose hand has lain
 Upon the stricken soldier's brow, whose word
 The starving garrison with weeping heard
 And strove again.

Deep reverent ranks of citizens, long miles
 Of white exalted faces, tears and smiles,
 The sudden throb,
 The roar that makes all golden language crude—
 The echoing thunder of the multitude—
 The cheer—the sob !

.

She passes from her people, and the street
Rings once again to London's hurrying feet,
The vast machine
Grinds on again ; but hark ! from pole to pole,
From zone to zone, the prayer from every soul—
“ God save the Queen ! ”



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